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A D D R E S S

BEFORE THE

Ulster County Homeopathic Medical Society.

BY

EGBERT GUERNSEY, M.D.

New-York :

JOHN A. GRAY & GREEN, PRINTERS, 16 AND 18 JACOB STREET.

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ADDRESS.

THE leading minds in the medical world, at the present time, are divided into two schools: the allopathic and the homœopathic school. The one claims to be regular and orthodox, and points, with a feeling of pride, to the long list of worthies whose names have shone so brightly in the medical firmament, from the time of Hippocrates, the venerable father of medicine, to the present.

"We follow," say they, "in the footsteps of those illustrious men. We inherit the fruits of their vast experience, of their scientific researches, of all their toils in behalf of humanity. We are naturally zealous, lest the temple they reared with so much care be defaced with inscriptions which would mar its beauty, or echo to voices of heresy."

The other claims that the terms "regular and orthodox" have been usurped by their allopathic friends, and say they belong more properly to themselves. The glories of the past, the memories which cluster around its great names, the rich experience of the fathers of medicine, are theirs, theirs by a common heritage. We, of the United States, claim that the name of Shakespeare, and of other great lights in English literature of that day, belong equally to us as to England; they belong to all who have since sprung from that nation.

The homœopathic school claims, too, that they have not only availed themselves of the rich stores of experience of the fathers of medicine, but have cut off the crudities and rubbish which had gathered around great truths, introducing simplicity, order, and harmony where once was darkness and confusion, raising medicine to the dignity of a positive science, and giving to it an impetus for good it had never before possessed. Standing thus in the front rank of the army of human prog-

ress, more and more satisfied, by the rapidly accumulating experience of years, of the correctness of their position, they justly claim for themselves the title of "regular and orthodox," and refuse to be driven from the stronghold of their scientific position by any cry of empiricism or quackery. They believe that the rapid advancement towards their position of the allopathic school itself, and the tremendous changes for good which have taken place in the medical world during the last thirty years, are owing to the influence of their doctrines, and, relying upon the glorious success of their principles wherever pestilence has reared its head, they calmly wait the no distant day for their universal triumph.

Outside of these two great schools of medicine are, of course, men of diverse theories ; but the great contest is between allopathy and homœopathy, the vast majority of the medical world being ranged under one or the other of these two systems. It is of vast importance to you, the people, that the question be fully and fairly understood. With you the question of the prolongation of human life and the relief of human suffering, the care of the body in this world, is second only in importance to your care for the soul in preparing it for a future existence.

How shall human life be prolonged, how human suffering best relieved, come home with power to every heart. The question, then, to which I ask your candid attention for a short time, is one of interest to you all—is one which appeals directly to your senses, which goes with you to the quiet of the sick-chamber, and stands by you as you look down upon the writhing forms and suffering faces of those you love. Between the two great systems of medicine which agitate the world, where lies the truth ? I shall try in this discussion to be perfectly impartial and candid. I shall bring to it no feeling of sectarian bitterness, and shall indulge in no harsh remarks against those who differ from me in opinion. I am a physician, answerable to God for the manner in which I discharge the duties of my high calling. I was once in the so-called allopathic school of medicine, and in that school to-day are some of my warmest friends. Truth does not require sophistry and harshness of speech to secure its triumphs.

The so-called allopathic school has been, more or less, for centuries, devout and humble followers of Galen, professing, until recently, a strong belief in the dogma which he made the corner-stone of his system, the doctrine of *contraria*, or that diseases are cured by their contraries. Under this system, the most violent forms of medication were used. The moxa, the blister, the hot iron were used to produce revulsive effects, while the purge, the emetic, and the lancet were looked upon as the great anchors of practice. Later, within the past two or three centuries, they have added to their repertory opium, mercury, arsenic, and sulphur, those potent drugs first introduced into practice by the homeopath Paracelsus, and which, given in accordance with the law of *similia*, are indeed most effective in the cure of disease, but which, in the massive doses of the allopath, without regard to principle or law, while they undoubtedly at times produced relief, oftener, by covering the disease, or producing others more serious than the first, have been productive of positive harm and even death.

Drug action, with them, meant the sledge-hammer blow. In fact, the whole system of drug medication was founded on the doctrine of brute force as applied to the human form. I am speaking now of the medical world previous to the past thirty years, since which time its practice and teachings have materially changed under the benign influence of a higher and purer philosophy. One after another, old abuses are passing away; year after year the allopathic school has approached nearer and nearer the truth, learning better to understand the sensitive human form and the dynamic action of drugs. The old blood-red flag of the lancet, which so long flaunted its crimson folds, is going down before enlightened reason, and the massive doses of crude drugs are becoming things of the past. The candid, inquiring, scientific minds of that school are looking about to find out where they are, and their leading writers, Watson, Bennett, Forbes, and hosts of others, men whom we all respect for their rare talents and conscientious labors in the cause of science and humanity, all confess they have no law to guide them in the selection of drugs; that medicine has no claim to rank among the positive sciences; that it is nothing more or less than a mass of empiricism. The learned and

eloquent Dr. Forbes went still further, and said he believed it would have been better for the human race if no medicinal plant or drug had ever been discovered for the cure of disease.

But is this really so? In the centuries which have elapsed since the time of the great Father of medicine, have we made no advances towards the positive? Have we still, notwithstanding the toil and research of so many minds, no firm foothold, but are still drifting about on the ocean of empiricism? Far from it. What was once a chaotic mass has crystallized into a noble science, beautiful in its simplicity, grand and noble in its results.

The same great Father of medicine who enunciated the dogma of *contraria*, which, through the influence of Galen, was for so many centuries the doctrine of the allopathic school, enunciated also the doctrine of *similia*, which Hahnemann seized hold of so eagerly, and with his logical mind, and far-reaching habits of thought and observation, worked up into a grand and comprehensive system—a system which subsequent observation has shown to be founded on a correct philosophy. It gives to the physician, at last, a law to guide him in the bewildering mazes of disease, as enduring and firmly fixed in the heart of nature as that of gravitation itself. That law is, "*similia similibus curantur*," the basis, the corner-stone of that advanced philosophy, which is now everywhere winning such glorious triumphs, and stretching forth its conquering arms over the world.

"Like is cured by its like," says the law; that is, drugs taken into the living system produce, by their irritation or poisonons action, certain disturbances in the vital organism, manifested by symptoms—pain, fever, nervous excitement, or depression, etc. This is a drug action, the disturbance usually passing away after the immediate effects of the drug are over. Now, whenever similar symptoms exist in the system as the result of disease from any cause other than drug action, they show a diseased condition of the system similar to that produced by the drug. Now comes in the law—the drug which would produce like symptoms to those now existing as the result of disease, given in minute doses, acts specifically on the diseased part, and produces a cure.

The reason is simple. A drug has a twofold action, a disturbing or depressing action, and a soothing, tonic, and curative action. In the one case it may paralyze the vital forces, bringing death, and in the other instill new life into the wasting and decaying energies. In the one case it may increase the disturbance, and in the other, by its tonic action, gently bring nature back to its proper track. The effects of opium are familiar to you all; in massive doses producing stupor, paralysis of all the vital forces, and death; in diminished doses, soothing pain and wooing to gentle sleep, or conjuring up before the mind visions more gorgeous or more full of terrors than poet in his wildest flights ever dreamed. How delicious the influence of wine upon the exhausted system! How it quickens the pulse, brightens the intellect, and gives strength to the weary limbs! And yet, taken in excess, or when the system does not require it, you see the effect, in the reeling, staggering gait, the idiotic laugh, the wild frenzy, or the drunken stupor. In the one case we have the curative action, and in the other the drug action.

And so with disease. It is the curative action of the drug we seek for, but the guide to its curative action is in the various phases and modifications of the drug action, which we must first understand. You can very readily see why the diseased condition of an organ would render it more sensitive to the action of a drug, which would produce a like disease in a healthy system, than to one which had no specific action upon that organ. Give your remedy in just such doses as will soothe the irritated nerves, tone up the vital force to its normal standard, and bring on a healthy action, and the obstruction is removed. Nature again moves on in its wonted channels, the cure is complete. You require no general process of depletion, no drawing of the life-blood, no wrenching and tearing of the human system, no revulsive efforts; but a drug selected which you know by actual test on the living organism will produce like effects to those caused by the disease; and then give it, not to produce its drug action—for you have its counterpart in the disease—but in such minute doses as will secure its tonic, soothing, curative action upon the diseased parts.

If the drug is given in too large doses, it produces its drug

action, increasing the trouble ; if in too small doses, it fails to produce the desired effect. Such, then, is the law of cure, the law of *similia*, the law which is the corner-stone of homœopathy ; simple, easily comprehended, yet, in the every-day movements of nature, demonstrated to be correct. You are all familiar with the action of camphor. You know, given in massive doses, it produces an effect almost the direct counterpart of Asiatic cholera ; the same coldness of the extremities, the same flagging pulse, the same watery diarrhoea and fearful cramps. You do not know, perhaps, that Hahnemann, guided by his great law, was the first in Europe to suggest it as a specific for that fearful disease. To the present day, it is looked upon as the great remedy, by all schools, in the treatment of that disease.

Did you ever see a person under the poisonous effects of *nux vomica*? What fearful spasms, what partial or entire paralysis ! Both schools recognize it as the great specific where these symptoms exist as the result of disease. Why is it that allopathic physicians find no remedy so efficacious in the control of certain forms of nausea and vomiting, as ipecac and tartar emetic ? They give them in the same way, in the same dose, and for the same purpose that we do, to soothe the irritated nerves, tone up the vital force, and bring on a healthy reaction. But is this action in accordance with the law of *similia*, or *contraria*? Judge ye.

But, says the objector, I did not know this law was the great feature of homœopathy. I supposed it consisted rather in infinitesimal doses, in a certain number of shakes given to a drug, and in careful regard to rules of diet. Do you not think, my honest friend, it would be wise for you to become conversant with the principles of the doctrines you condemn, before you attack with ridicule and heap upon it unsparing abuse ? But, do all remedial agents act in obedience to this law ; are we always to be guided by the law of *similia*, in the selection of the appropriate remedy ? Certainly not ; but the points of divergence are easily comprehended, the indications being so plain that there is but little chance for mistake. The science of medicine, like man, like nature, is a trinity in itself, and the law of *similia* only forms one part of the great triangle.

At times, we require agents, which act mechanically, removing from the system mechanical obstructions. We do not use these drugs for any medicinal action, they may have, but to avail ourselves of their irritative or mechanical action to remove offending obstructions. They act neither allopathically nor homœopathically, but simply relieve the system by their irritative or mechanical action. The bowels are clogged by a mass of hardened faeces which have been allowed to accumulate, until the patient feels the effect in the brain, the stomach, and the entire system. The natural and correct thought is to remove at once the irritating cause, either by an enema or by some mild cathartic. The action is mechanical; the pressure of foreign bodies is taken away, and then we can apply our dynamic agents with a prospect of speedy and permanent cure.

So, when substances are taken into the stomach, which, owing to weakness, it can not assimilate, or, owing to the poisonous nature of the article, the whole system is speedily brought under the poisonous influence of the drug, common sense teaches us that, unless the irritative substance be speedily removed, general disturbance of the system and perhaps death may ensue, and we use at once the stomach-pump or emetic; we get rid as speedily as possible of the irritative cause of all the trouble, and then make use of our dynamic agents to tone up the organs and repair the mischief. In children, as well as in adults, owing to the weakness of the stomach, food often passes into the intestines, producing flatulence, pain, and diarrhoea, and, if not speedily relieved, dysentery and positive inflammation.

What does common sense teach the physician? Remove as speedily as possible the irritating substance by some mild cathartic which will bring on mechanical action of the intestinal canal, causing it at once to eject the offending substance. But, do you say, is not this treatment allopathic, and are you not showing a divided allegiance? Not at all. It is one part of that great triangle which constitutes medical science, the mechanical part, and, when kept in its proper place, belongs as much to us as to any one else. It is the abuse of these agents which renders them at times unscientific and unsafe. Under the above head, may also be included those remedies which

act directly as palliatives. During the passage of stone from the gall-bladder, or the kidneys, the physician is often compelled to resort to drugs which stupefy the senses or take away all sensibility to pain, so intense is the agony. It is not the curative action of the drug he seeks, but its stupefying power, the immediate relief it gives to pain almost too great to be borne.

There is another class of affections in which we require agents which act chemically upon the system. There may be a deficiency in the system of some material which contributes an important share in keeping up the harmony of life. The absence of this material may have been produced by a variety of causes; but wherever it exists, disturbance in some portion of the animal economy is sure to follow. We know that in health a certain portion of iron exists in the blood, and that it is absolutely essential to the life of that fluid. Wherever we see the blanched face, the cold extremities, and general weakness and weariness of the entire frame, we naturally conclude there is an impoverished condition of the blood, and, if certain other symptoms are present, know that the patient requires iron, not as a dynamic agent, but as food, food to be taken directly into the blood to supply the waste which has been going on. We give iron as food, in such perfect solution that the little absorbents may take up the infinitesimal particles and carry them onward in their mission of healing. After this has been accomplished, and the organs of assimilation restored to their normal tone, they find no difficulty in taking up from the food, if the proper kind is given, all of this material required.

Again, there may be a deficiency of phosphorus or of some of the phosphates in the system. The power of absorbing them from food has, from some cause or other, become impaired, and the system feels the effect, perhaps, in curvature of the bones, softening of the brain, general nervous prostration, or a variety of affections which might follow from their absence. The patient requires, as food, those materials so essential to life of which there is an insufficiency in the system, and which, if they can not be furnished in his daily nutriment, must be given in some form in which they can be readily taken up and passed into the circulation. And here the chemist comes to

our aid. The teachings of Hahnemann have produced their effect upon his mind, and he is preparing us some exceedingly beautiful preparations of the phosphates—preparations which legitimately belong to us, for they are, as I shall hereafter show, the direct result of Hahnemann's doctrine of dynamization, preparations which, as occasion requires, we do not hesitate to use.

We often find, in the bilious diarrhoeas and dysenteries which prevail during and after the heats of summer, no remedies so effectual as acid fruits, sour berries, or cider. The action is chemical, neutralizing, as they do, the excess of alkali and the half-burnt up particles of carbon with which the tissues are filled, and which the system is trying to expel in the diarrhoea and dysentery.

But, does the objector say, You are verging upon the grounds of allopathy? Not in the least. The action of these agents is neither allopathic nor homœopathic, but chemical, and the domains of enlightened scientific chemistry belong peculiarly to us. Chemical medicine gives us the second part of the great triangle, the whole of which constitutes the complete system of medical science.

I have already referred to the base of this triangle, the curative action of drugs by their dynamic power, in which the law of *similia* reigns supreme. Here it is where drugs are given, neither for their mechanical nor chemical effect, but for their curative action, the homœopathic law comes in as an unfailing guide in the selection of a remedy. The dose may be gauged by the condition of the patient, his constitution and temperament, and the circumstances by which he is surrounded. One of a highly spiritual or nervous organization may require a highly attenuated form of medicine, while another of a more lymphatic temperament, more gross in his physical structure, less sensitive in his nervous organization, may require the medicine in its crude state. In either case, whether given in the billionth part of a grain, or in a grain of the pure drug, it is given homœopathically, provided it is selected in accordance with the law of *similia*, and given in just such an amount as will produce a healthy reaction in the diseased organism. No sensible physician would think of giving drugs to those breathing a noxious at-

mosphere of pestilential dens, whose nervous sensibility must be partially benumbed by the exhalation of poison going on all around, in the same attenuated form that he would to those living in a pure atmosphere, carefully nursed, and surrounded by the luxuries of life. Neither would we think of controlling a miasmatic disease in a person who still continued to reside in the miasmatic district, with the doses we should find all-sufficient if he were removed into a more healthy location.

Out of this great law of cure has grown, almost as a necessity, the theory of the dynamization of remedies. The law of cure itself, with all its scientific philosophy, has been overlooked, ignored entirely by the opponents of homœopathy, and the dynamization theory or infinitesimal doses which they ever failed to comprehend has been held up as the sum and substance of the whole system. This has been made the text for their learned discourses, for their mathematical calculations of the amount of water necessary to carry up one of our higher potencies. We have been grandly told, as an illustration of homœopathy, of a drop of the drug placed in Lake Michigan, and a tea-spoonful of the water taken as it poured over the falls of Niagara, or, as illustrating the higher potencies, of a drop of the drug thrown into the North river and a tea-spoonful taken of the waters of the Mediterranean ; and these arguments, repeated over and over again, have been about the strongest which have ever been brought against our system.

Let us bring this doctrine of dynamization or infinitesimals to the test, and see whether it is so unscientific as has been claimed. Nature is the great teacher of us all, and to her let us go for instruction. In dynamization we purify the drug from its crude, inert materials, and, by a process of trituration, divide and subdivide each atom into infinitesimal proportions, bringing out thereby its life and latent power, fitting it to act in its purified form upon that most delicate of living structures, the human form. Go back, I say, to nature, and listen to her lessons. There is not a particle of matter in existence which has not a latent power, only requiring proper influences to develop into active life. Imagine, if you can, this planet before it was covered with vegetation, or the soil formed upon its surface. Look at its rocky ribs, its granite mountains

heaved up from the molten depths below ; but nowhere motion or sign of life save in the elements alone, the lightning, the thunder, the tempest, the sun.

Can there ever be life on those barren rocks ? Can this scene of desolation ever be covered with living matter and peopled with living forms ? What resurrection can bring life from this waste of death ? Hold, be not too hasty, watch the slow progress of nature. The rain, as it dashes upon those barren rocks, triturates and grinds their granite and volcanic particles, until in time a slight film of soil is formed, and, all the time, the waves of light flowing down from the sun quicken into new life these before apparently dead particles of matter, bringing into play their electric power, and forthwith we see springing up the little mosses and lichens, plants of a single cell, the commencement of a new life ; life, it is true, as yet but little above that of the rocks, and yet a new life, a life of growth, of assimilation, the dawning life of the vegetable world. And so the work of creation progresses, the soil thickening, as the ages roll on, by the growth and decay of animal matter, until the whole earth is green and blossoming with vegetable life.

Chemical affinities, electric influences, the quickening power of light and heat and rain acting on the barren rocks have brought forth life, verdure, and beauty. The plants themselves, the tree, the grass, the flower, acted on by sun, air, and moisture, draw to themselves the strength and life of the soil ; the silex, the fibrine, the tough fibre, the delicate coloring matter of the rose and lily, are constantly changing their particles, and gathering from the elements materials for their own growth, beauty, and life. From the dark mud of the swamps, from an atmosphere laden with miasmatic poison, we see growing the beautiful flower, painted as never art can paint, and the lofty tree clad in glorious, living verdure, and both drawing from the poisonous atmosphere and death-exhaling soil not only their own life and beauty, but the remedial agents which have the power of charming away disease and death engendered by these miasmatic influences.

Again, a drop of water, clear as crystal, cooling the fevered brow, sparkling upon the flower, separates the rays of light as

they pass through it, throws upon the arched sky the gorgeous rainbow. Acted upon by a slight amount of heat, its particles separate, it swells in volume until it tears in pieces the tough and sinewy iron and scatters ruin around. Develop all its electric force, and each drop possesses a power sufficient to strike with death the strongest man. These are nature's processes of dynamization, and shall man be wiser than God, or laugh at his works?

Will man never learn the more closely we copy nature the nearer we are to the truth? Shall we never get rid of the gross materialism of the age? Shall we never learn to look beneath the surface at the inner life and power upon which all the external phenomena depend? We are told, with a sneer, your doctrine of dynamization is new and has yet to meet the test of experience. New! it is as old as eternity. Wherever life has swept through the realm of matter, there this law has been in force, binding particle with particle, and giving us matter in tangible form. We see it in the rays of light which flow down from the sun, vitalizing, purifying, and making bright the face of nature. Why, this law, I might almost say, is the law of life itself as applied to the material world. How does the tree grow, drawing nourishment from the soil and air? How the flower obtain its glowing tints except by means of this law? The particles of matter upon which they feed are so infinitesimal that they flow into the plant through the air, and are absorbed from the earth through its delicate vessels.

What do we aim to do with drugs but free them from their crudities, break up their atoms infinitesimally, so that their whole force may be developed and each minute particle may produce its effect on the living organism? I care not whether this process of infinitesimal division be done with the mortar and pestle, the laboratory of the chemist, or the great laboratory of nature. The result is the same. Every physician admits the superior medicinal virtues of the chalybeate springs holding iron in perfect solution, over any form of that drug which can be prepared in the laboratory of the chemist. It is held in such perfect solution that each minute particle flows into the circulation, producing its legitimate effects. Said I not

right, then, that the chemists, in relieving their drugs of impurities and breaking up their atoms infinitesimally, are doing our work, and their labors belong to us?

But, again says the objector, you give your drugs in such minute doses. Not always; but we often meet with peculiar idiosyncrasies of constitution which are increased a hundred-fold by the disease, where only the most minute doses can prove beneficial. That disease does increase this sensitiveness to the action of drugs is apparent to all. What more refreshing to the thirsty than a glass of water, and yet, where there is gastric inflammation, a single drop produces intense agony, and brings on fearful and long continued vomiting. And so with the inflamed eye; the room must be kept darkened, for the light, so soothing and refreshing in health, now seems armed with metallic points, bringing with it the most intense agony. The wise man who triumphantly swallowed a vial of medicated globules forgot these familiar illustrations, and did not know that, to render the medicine active, the parts to which they are specifically adapted must first be morbidly sensitive by disease.

I have endeavored to show in these remarks: *First.* That the allopathic system of medicine, if it can be rightly called a system, from the opinion of its own leading men, has no foundation in science. It is but a mass of empiricism, without law or rule, other than that of experience, to guide it in the selection of remedies.

Secondly. That our school has an antiquity equal to theirs, the same great Father of medicine enunciating both the law of *contraria* and of *similia*. It is true, that during the darkness of the early ages, when brute force reigned triumphant, the doctrine of *contraria* everywhere prevailed; but when the trammels of superstition were cast off and enlightened merit everywhere asserted its sway in the fields of science and philosophy, *similia* came forth from its hiding-place, brought order out of confusion, and gave to the world a system which, in the beauty of its philosophy, and the correctness of its scientific deductions, stands side by side with the great systems of Kepler and Newton.

Thirdly. I have endeavored to show the scientific character

of the homœopathic law of cure, and to answer as concisely as possible, in the limits of a single lecture, the oft-repeated inquiry, "What is homœopathy?" I have shown that the homœopathic law forms only one part of the great triangle which constitutes a scientific system of medicine, the other parts being the mechanical and chemical applications of drugs. Even Pereira himself, the most profound writer on *materia medica* the allopathic school has ever produced, confesses that our plan of a *materia medica*, that of testing each drug on the healthy system, is the only scientific plan ever adopted.

Has this system stood the test of experience? Ample statistics will show that wherever it has been subjected to the test, in the most malignant forms of disease, in the most fearful pestilences, it has come out triumphant. More than this, it has changed and is changing the character of the whole medical world. Look back, some of you, to your childhood, and contrast the treatment then and now. What has wrought this wondrous change? What but the humanizing, harmonizing influence of homœopathy! Even the leading allopathic writers themselves confess that the world is indebted to homœopathy for the complete change in medical practice which has taken place during the last thirty years. Patients, they say, do recover under the little doses of homœopathy, owing, undoubtedly, to the simple power of nature; would it not be well for us to leave more to nature and less to drugs? Year after year, their practice has been changing, is changing. Every year they are approaching nearer and nearer to more scientific philosophy. Slowly and surely the partition walls between the two schools are crumbling down. •God hasten the time when we shall all stand together on the platform of *similia*, the same flag above us, on whose ample folds shall be inscribed in letters of gold, "Relief to Human Suffering."

